

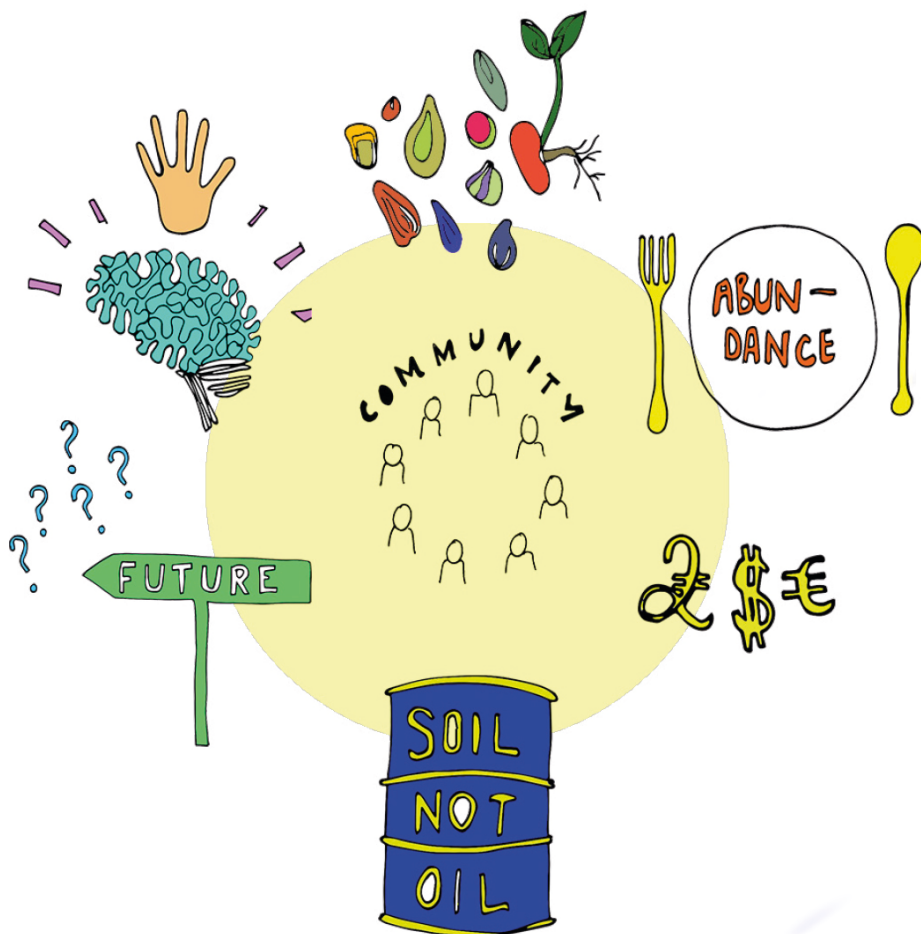


# SAVING SEEDS

## SIMPLE HOW-TO

**An illustrated journey of why & how to save seeds**

*It has taken 10,000 years of human hands saving seeds to get the food diversity that feeds and nourishes us today. To support nature's resilience and continue feeding ourselves - we need to practice, celebrate and value this skill, - it is community activism at its best!*



# TO GROW

The seed bears all the vital nutrients and genetic information to start growing into a plant. With a bit of air, a little water and a touch of light the plant is on its way. With a caring human hand to grow it and to save new seed we can preserve the genetic diversity of our crops and our resilience for the future.



## **Growth process definitions :**

complete cycle : seed - flower - seed

germination : growing from a seed to a seedling, rooting and shooting

pollination : transfer of pollen from male part of plant to female, makes plant fertile

self pollination : when a plant pollinates itself

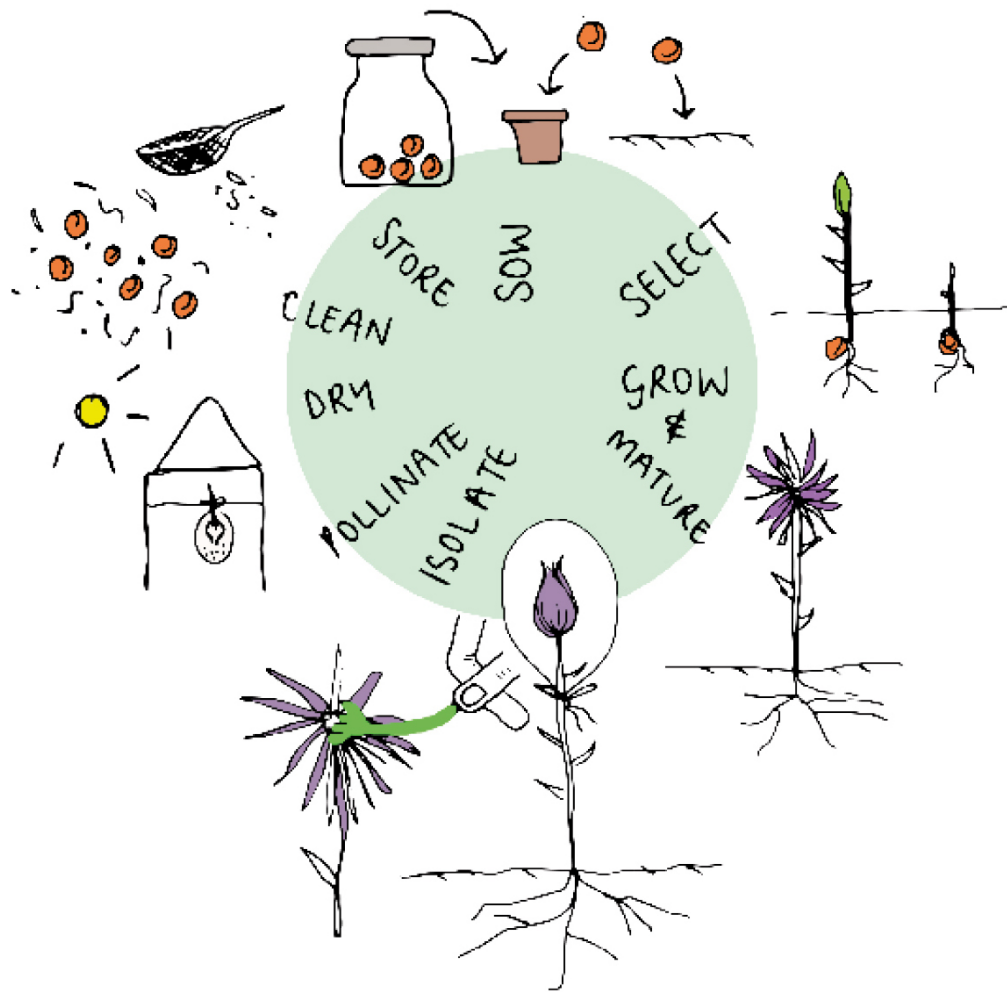
hand pollination : human places pollen onto female part, isolating the flower from insects

cross pollination : when plant receives pollen from another separate plant

open pollinated : pollinated in nature, more genetically diverse, greater variation of plants, better local adaptability

# SAVING

A plant's main purpose is to reproduce. Seed production is the most effective way of ensuring genetic diversity and long-term success of a species. For a flowering plant to produce seeds it has to collaborate with nature to attract a pollinating partner: insects, bees, butterflies, birds, wind & humans!



seed head : a flower head full of ripe seeds

winnow : separate seed from chaff, sieve

chaff : dry, protective seed casing

cloche / fleece : cover for plants, protect against frost, birds, insects

airtight container : glass jar or plastic tub. Seeds will absorb moisture promoting ageing, germination or rotting if not stored this way

types of seeds

heirloom : defined by generational history within a family or community, or over 50 years old

organic : chemical free, non GMO

GMO : genes are mechanically altered by man

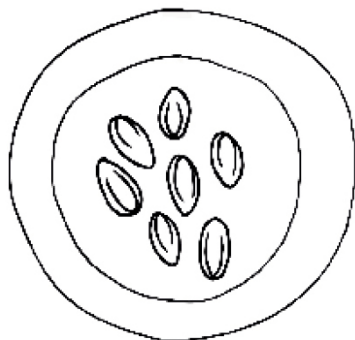
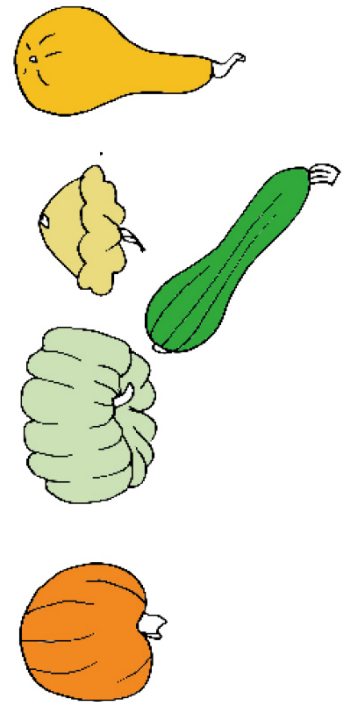
hybrid/F1 : pollination is done by largely profit driven corporations, cannot be saved for use in following years



# SQUASH



Squash / Pumpkin / Marrow / Courgette (Cucurbits)  
This family of vegetables will cross-pollinate with each other. The best way to save seed is usually to hand pollinate. The plants have 2 different types of flower, male and female. The female flowers grow into pumpkins, identified by small immature fruit, which should be obvious beneath the flower. The male flowers have a straight stem. Select 1-3 plants to save seed from. Just before the flowers open, gently place a rubber band around the flowers, to hold them shut. The next day remove the rubber band & use the male stamen like a brush, to rub the pollen female stigma. Return the rubber band around the female flower and tie a piece string around the stem so at harvest time, you know which pumpkins you have hand pollinated. After fully ripening your fruit, cut it in half, scoop out the seeds, wash - separating the seed from the pulp and dry on a plate in a warm room for a few weeks. Store in an airtight container. Store: at least 4 years



Sow : Inside from April, outside in soil from late May

Harvest : For eating summer squash harvest when small and tender. Pumpkin sounds hollow upon knocking

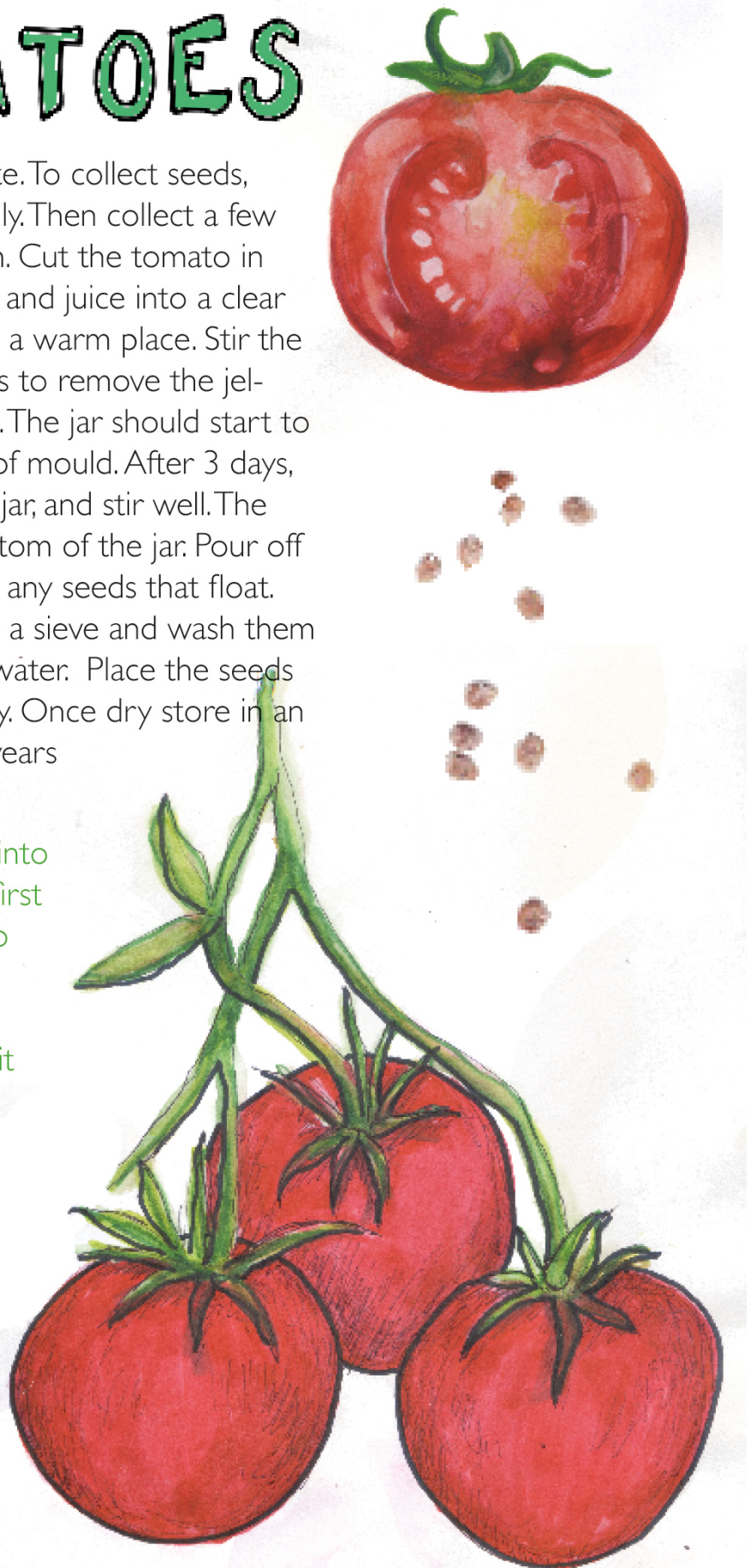
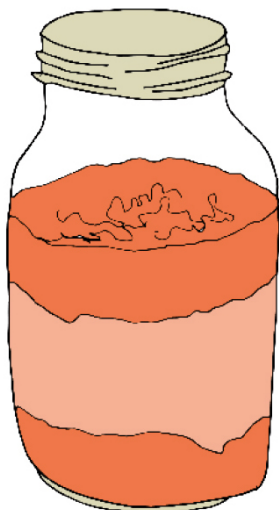


# TOMATOES

Most tomatoes self-pollinate. To collect seeds, allow tomatoes to ripen fully. Then collect a few you wish to save seed from. Cut the tomato in half and squeeze the seeds and juice into a clear glass jar. Leave for 3 days in a warm place. Stir the seeds twice a day; this helps to remove the jelly-like coating on the seeds. The jar should start to smell & develop a coating of mould. After 3 days, add plenty of water to the jar, and stir well. The good seeds sink to the bottom of the jar. Pour off the top layer of mould and any seeds that float. Empty the good seeds into a sieve and wash them thoroughly under running water. Place the seeds on a plate to dry out slowly. Once dry store in an airtight container. Store: 4 years

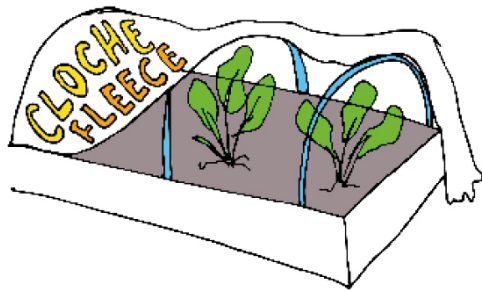
Sow : from late February, once seedlings appear put into individual pots, when the first flower appears put out into rich soil

Harvest : you'll see the fruit look ripe and smell fresh!



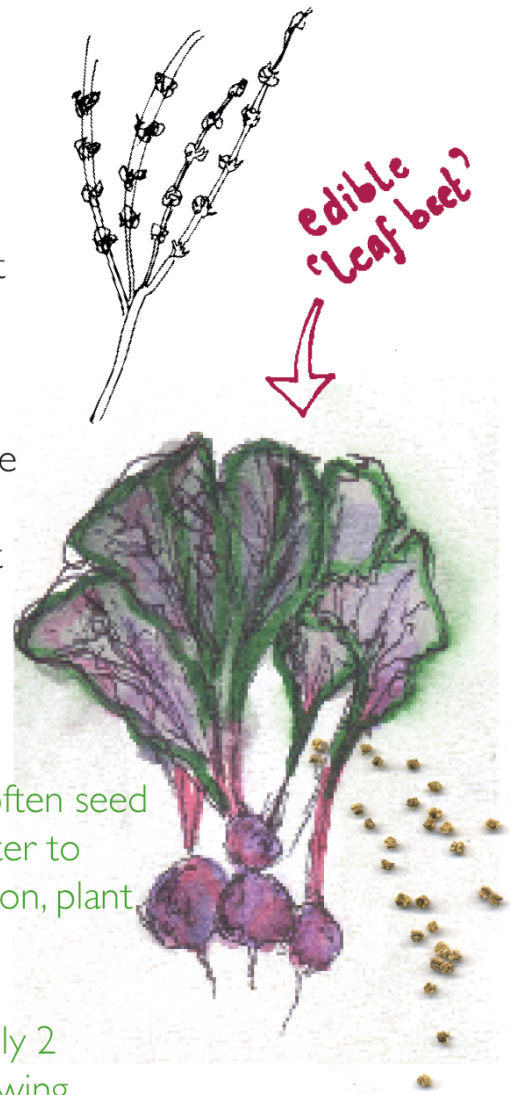
# BEETROOT

These are biennial, they flower in their second year and this is when you can save seeds. Select between 6-8 healthy plants close together to save seed from. When the flowers start to emerge, cover them with a fleece or water-proof shiny paper bag secured with string. Shake the bag from time to time to distribute the pollen. When the plant dies after flowering, cut off the stems and hang them upside down in a paper bag to dry. Once dry you can separate the brown prickly seed clusters. Store in an airtight container. Store: 5 years



Sow : Spring, soften seed overnight in water to speed germination, plant in 2cm drill

Harvest : roughly 2 months after sowing



# LETTUCE

If lettuces are left to grow and not harvested, they end up as flower stalks, these flowers are insect pollinated. Select 2-3 good lettuces from your row. Place a paper bag over seed head to protect from birds & this allows them to dry. When the stalks are completely dry, cut and winnow. Dry on a plate in a warm condition for a few weeks. Store in an airtight container. Store: 3 years

Sow : Spring, soften seed overnight in water to speed germination, plant in 2cm drill

Harvest : roughly 2 months after sowing





# BROAD BEANS



Broad bean pollen is transferred by insects, it'll take them longer to reach beans in the middle of your patch so select healthy beans here to save. As soon as the flower buds emerge, place a cloche over the selected beans, the plant will self-pollinate & be protected from cross-pollination by insects. Leave bean pods to go brown, crispy and dry on the plant, into autumn. Place in a warm air flowing area to dry further. Then 'pod' - remove the beans by hand & store in airtight container. Store: 3 years



Sow : late spring – May, place 2 seeds every 15cm incase one fails to germinate  
Harvest : 2-3 months after sowing

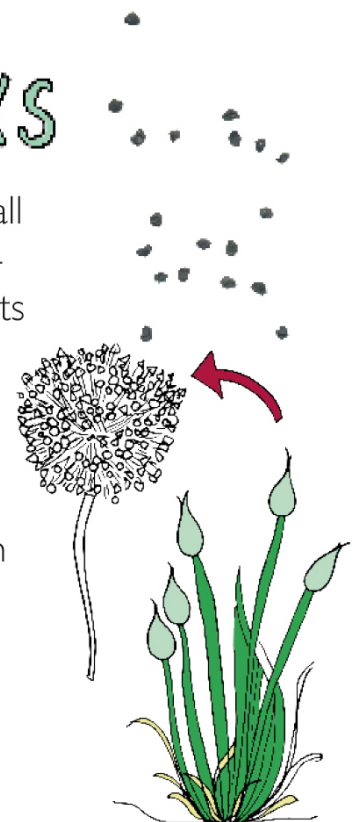


# ALLIUMS ONIONS & LEEKS

Sow : March-April, early spring, leave 15cm between plants

Harvest : Onions, late summer. Leeks, Autumn.

The seed head is produced on a tall stem, (leeks up to 180cm long). Allow 4 or 5 of your leek/onion plants to go to seed. The seed heads dry, shatter and then open, cut off the heads before this happens. (The seeds will turn black inside the drying flowers). Hang upside down in a bag/pillowcase indoors - up to 3 weeks. Winnow, store in airtight container. Store: 3-9 years





Seed saving has been done by people for thousands of years. Growers have saved the seeds of the healthiest growing plants, creating a huge **living genetic diversity bank**. This has meant that people and food were **connected locally, autonomously** by a craft & skill, essential to survive and thrive. In today's world we still need this diversity for resilience against disease and a changing climate.

However, in the last 40 years industrial and profit driven companies have claimed ownership of seeds, making many of them identical hybrids. Through resource intensive monoculture farming & corporate control we are losing **local seeds & the knowledge, culture & power** of growing & saving seeds ourselves and in our communities.



**Bristol Seed Swap event is part of a global movement of people** who recognise seed swapping as an opportunity to share skills, techniques, knowledge, experience, stories, ideas, dreams... it strengthens both our biodiversity and community.

#### **More info:**

[www.realseeds.co.uk](http://www.realseeds.co.uk)   [www.gardenorganics.org.uk](http://www.gardenorganics.org.uk)   [www.seedfreedom.info](http://www.seedfreedom.info)  
[www.landworkersalliance.org.uk/south-west-seed-savers-cooperative](http://www.landworkersalliance.org.uk/south-west-seed-savers-cooperative)  
[www.permaculture.co.uk/articles/top-tips-seed-saving](http://www.permaculture.co.uk/articles/top-tips-seed-saving)  
[www.seedambassadors.org/seed-saving-guide/](http://www.seedambassadors.org/seed-saving-guide/)  
The Seed Savers' Handbook, Jeremy Cherfas

This booklet has been handmade with the sole purpose of sharing knowledge that can re-connect us to each other through creating our future...

Artwork - Catie Jarman & Jodie Cooper  
Text and design - Catie Jarman